

Corporation for National and Community Service

2010 Social Innovation Fund

The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Reviewer Comments – Phase 2

PANEL 1 EVALUATION REVIEW

SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND 2010

EVALUATION CONSENSUS FORM

*Instructions throughout this form are indicated in **red**.*

Before you begin, please fill out the Applicant Name and Application ID# in the above header.

This Evaluation Consensus Form (ECF) is where each panel records its consensus assessment of an application. The completion of this form may be led by any panelist; that individual will be designated the Lead Reviewer (LR). All Reviewers are expected to serve as the LR on at least two applications. **The evaluation consensus assessment should be based on the panel's examination of only the subcategories highlighted in red in the chart below, not the full application. In addition, Evaluation Reviewers should only assess how well applicants responded to the specific evidence-based criteria within the subcategories highlighted in yellow in this form.**

Category	Percentage	Subcategories
Program Design	45%	A. Goals and Objectives B. Use of Evidence C. Community Resources D. Description of Activities i. Subgranting ii. Technical Assistance and Support
Organizational Capacity	35%	A. Ability to Provide Program Oversight B. Ability to Provide Fiscal Oversight
Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	20%	A. Budget and Program Design B. Match Sources

Panels will utilize Panel Consensus Calls to discuss each application and come to agreement on the content of the Narrative Assessment for each category, the Rating for each category, the Overall Appraisal Statement and the Band in which the application will be placed. When completing this form, the LR should rely on four primary documents: 1) the application being reviewed; 2) the SIF Review Notes page from each panelist; 3) the SIF Notice of Federal Funds Availability (NOFA); 4) the Consensus Rubric at the end of this form.

Please complete the following steps:

1. For each of the 3 categories the LR should:
 - a. **Write a 3 – 5 sentence Narrative Assessment** reflecting the panel's assessment of the quality of the response in the category being assessed; it is important that this narrative include brief summary information, but more importantly, the panel's evaluation of the application's quality.
 - b. **List the application's significant strengths and weaknesses and annotate each.** Each significant strength or weakness **must** be supported by **at least one** of the Eligibility or Application Review Criteria that were in the SIF NOFA. (criteria are included in this form)
 - c. **Taking into consideration** both the Narrative Assessment and the listed strengths and weaknesses, **select a category Rating** by checking the appropriate box.
2. **Complete the Overall Appraisal section.** In this section, you will:
 - a. Provide an Overall Appraisal Statement; and
 - b. Select a Consensus Band that represents the quality of the application as a whole. The Bands are described in the Overall Appraisal section at the end of this form.

PROGRAM DESIGN (45%)

The Social Innovation Fund Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Program Design.

A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Corporation asks applicants to use a thematic approach in describing their proposed investments in community organizations. As established in the Act, there are two basic operational models of SIF intermediaries. The first is a SIF that will operate in a single geographic location, and address one or more priority issues within that location. This model is referred to as a "geographically-based SIF." The second model is a SIF that will address a single priority issue area in multiple geographic locations. This model is referred to as an "issue-based SIF." The Corporation will assess whether the application properly proposes goals and objectives as either a geographically-based or an issue-based SIF.

i. Geographically-Based SIF

The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area(s) within the specific local geographic area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to those issue areas that the applicant will seek to improve.

ii. Issue-Based SIF

The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area within the geographic areas likely to be served, including statistics demonstrating that those geographic areas have a high need in the priority issue area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to the priority issue area that the applicant will seek to improve.

B. USE OF EVIDENCE

i. Applicants must include in their application information describing their track record of using rigorous evidence, data, and evaluation tools to:

- *Select and invest in subgrantees;*
- *Support and monitor the replication and expansion of subgrantees; and*
- *Achieve measurable outcomes.*

D. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

i. Subgranting

- ##### **a.**
- Applicants must describe the process by which they will competitively select their nonprofit community organization subgrantees, and, if applicable, the process by which they have pre-selected some subgrantees. Specifically, applicants must describe how their competitive*

subgrant selection process will ensure a portfolio of subgrantees that are innovative nonprofit community organizations serving low-income communities and that possess:

- *A commitment to and track record of using data and evaluation for performance and program improvement;*
- *Evidence of effectiveness, including a demonstrated track record of achieving specific measurable outcomes related to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary;*
- *Strong potential for replication or expansion;*
- *A well-defined plan for achieving specific measurable outcomes connected to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary, evaluation of program effectiveness, performance improvement, and replication or expansion; and*

ii. **Technical Assistance and Support**

- a. *Applicants must include in their application information describing how they will provide technical assistance and support (other than financial support) that will increase the ability of subgrantees to achieve their measurable outcomes, including replication or expansion. Replication or expansion may happen in various ways (including, for example, creating new sites or affiliating with another program to replicate an intervention) and in multiple contexts (including, for example, serving more people in a current geography or growing to new geographies).*

Provide a panel assessment of the application's PROGRAM DESIGN as follows:

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

Panel Narrative Assessment

The applicant applies for \$10,000,000 towards support for an issue-based SIF (Youth Development and Schools Support) with no preselected subgrantees.

EMCF's pre-existing goals and work are tightly aligned with that of the SIF.

The proposal demonstrates that EMCF has a strong track record of multiyear support at substantial levels of funding for high performing youth development organizations. The proposal communicates a coherent application of its well-established social investment model to the SIF NOFA criteria, with evidence supporting all aspects of an intermediary grantmaking programming, including grantee selection, capacity building, ongoing assessment, evaluation and leveraging other funding. Their model includes longstanding collaborations with talented service providers MDRC (research and evaluation) and Bridgespan (organizational development; expansion).

The application asserts that in the past its non-financial support has contributed to the success of its grantees. While the evidence of effectiveness of the grantees is strong, the case for the non-financial contribution of the applicant to grantee success is not. Particularly given the three quarter of a billion dollar endowment of EMCF, it is reasonable to expect at various points in the proposal that specific

contributions of the different elements in its model would be better evidenced and analyzed, and the results framework and accompanying methodology more fully articulated.

Significant Strengths

The applicant's track record shows that it has a disciplined practice of using evidence of 1) program data on youth enrollment, participation, and completion; 2) organizational data on subgrantees' financial systems, staffing, talent development, capital to support scaling, progress against expansion plan, adequacy of local funding, management team's performance, and board leadership, and 3) evaluation evidence on program impact, using RCTs when feasible and appropriate. There are examples of how it uses evidence in each of these information areas in the proposal. The applicant's portfolio managers (PM) coordinate technical support from two longstanding technical support partners on the basis of agreed grantee plans refined and updated continuously on the basis of quarterly reporting. (*Program Design, D.i.a and D.ii.a.*)

To support the effectiveness of its grantmaking model, the proposal cites support to nationally recognized grantees such as Youth Villages, Center for Employment Opportunities, Nurse Family Partnership and Harlem Children's Zone. It provides numerous examples of how it continued and increased its funding for grantee organizations that were achieving impressive outcomes for young people (e.g., CAS-Carrera and NFP, p.14, BELL, p.15). (*Program Design, B.i.*)

The investment part of its model is well developed. Appropriately, the size of investments is described as a percentage of total growth capital needs – namely “50 to 70%” (p. 22). The allocation of this growth capital across different grantee needs – for example, planning, human resource development, strengthening management and communications systems – is based on a detailed needs diagnosis undertaken by the applicant and its expert technical assistance partners. (*Program Design, D.ii.a.*)

The applicant's framework of evidence of program effectiveness (see p. 13) sets out a hierarchy that is compatible with that of SIF. Its highest level of “proven effectiveness” is based on at least one experimental evaluation. “Demonstrated effectiveness” is based on systematic data collection and comparison to similar people not receiving the service. There is a clear discussion of importance of counterfactuals for estimating program impact (p. 11-12, 16). (*Program Design, B.i.*)

The applicant has a practice of pushing its grantees up the evidence ladder based on a readiness diagnostic undertaken by its evaluation specialist partner and if necessary organizational strengthening support to build the capacity to document and analyze evidence. The applicant selects for grantees that can achieve its highest level of evidence of program effectiveness within three years of its financial and technical support.

Significant Weaknesses

The discussion of statistics demonstrating need and their links with proposed outcomes and sub-outcomes is uneven with little definition or analysis to qualify the challenges of working with these outcomes or to weight their importance on the basis of statistical analysis. Understandably, the outcomes listed span a diverse range from education, employment, and “high-risk behavior”. Some sub-outcomes are concrete (teen pregnancy, academic achievement), but it is unclear what constitutes other outcomes such as “prepared for work” (what would be considered prepared?). “High risk behavior” is broken out into sub-outcomes, such as drug abuse, crime, and early sexual activity, but without any framework to suggest relative importance or relationship to invention priorities and relationships. (*Program Design, A.ii*)

The applicant's geographic targets seem to be opportunistic (e.g., where co-funding is available) rather than strategic (e.g., where evidence shows that need is greatest or pool of potential subgrantees is most promising). The supporting arguments appear selective – identifying specific problem indicators where that state or city exceeds the national average. One could use this form of analysis to argue the opposite just as readily. (See pp. 8-9 for discussion of the Carolinas, Oklahoma and California). (*Program Design, A.ii*)

The proposal offers 7 examples of investing in evaluations at pp. 26-27, but no analysis of the considerable challenges that organizations have to utilize evaluation findings. Beyond anecdote, what are the overall results from EMCF-funding evaluations? What role does EMCF play in enabling organizations to move from evaluation findings to action? Does EMCF track the utilization of evaluations that is supports? (*Program Design, D.i.a*)

Applicant asserts that partner Tipping Point, which will lead on subgrantee selection in one region, is “committed to rigorous grantmaking, evaluation and impact”. But there is no evidence provided to support this.

The various descriptions of evidence used make no reference to perceptual data (which can be quantified) such as could be derived from beneficiary feedback. (e.g., pp. 10 (program management), 11 (grantee management), 20 (performance milestones)). This weakness – a failure to appreciate the value of feedback data – is true at different points along the value chain that stretches from the applicant through the subgrantees to ultimate beneficiaries. This is so despite the fact that on p.19 the applicant cites the importance of interviewing service recipients in its “intensive due diligence”. (*Program Design, B*)

Assertions of the use of management and outcome information are illustrated with anecdotal examples (e.g., p.18 discussing the ongoing “competition process”), but there is no analysis of the rates of utilization of evaluative data overall or discussion of the challenges associated with making the mid-course corrections that evaluative data sometimes asks for. Nor is there any reference to comparison groups external to the grantee pool. (*Program Design, B and D.ii*)

Finally, despite the fact that the applicant has been working in the youth development field with its model for more than a decade, there is no reference to the development of shared metrics across its portfolio, either historically or prospectively. In our view, this is a significant weakness as it misses an important opportunity that is now increasingly recognized in the literature (see, e.g., *Breakthroughs in Shared Measurement and Social Impact*, by FSG Social Impact Advisors).

Select a Rating for PROGRAM DESIGN (double-click in the applicable box and select “checked”)

☐ Excellent

☒ Strong

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Weak/Non-responsive

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (35%)

The Social Innovation Fund NOFA states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Organizational Capacity.

A. ABILITY TO PROVIDE PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

In evaluating your organization's ability to provide program oversight, the Corporation will consider:

- i. *The extent to which your organization has a sound structure including:*
 - *The ability to provide sound programmatic oversight, including:*
 - *Experience with and capacity for evaluation, and*
 - *Experience with and capacity for supporting replication or expansion.*
 - *A well-designed plan and systems for organizational (as opposed to subgrantee) self-assessment and continuous improvement*
 - ii. *Whether your organization has a sound record of accomplishment, including the extent to which you:*
 - *Have a track record of supporting organizations that demonstrate evidence of impact;*
-

Provide a panel assessment of the application's ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY as follows:

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
 - **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
 - **Select a Rating for this section.**
-

Panel Narrative Assessment

EMCF's capacity is demonstrated by its impressive several decade track record in high impact grantmaking. As an endowed foundation, it has in-built financial capacity. But it has also demonstrated its ability to influence other funders to support its grantees, and services this through quarterly grantee performance reviews with co-investors. It has not, however, demonstrated a capacity to measure how much the different elements in its non-financial support model contribute to the overall difference it makes for its grantees.

Significant Strengths

The experience with and capacity for evaluation is strong across a wide range of evaluation methodologies and with a view to providing evidence ranging for real-time performance data to causal proofs. There is a well-described history of supporting strong evaluations, including numerous randomized controlled trials (p. 26-27). The evaluation partner, MDRC, is an industry leader with many rigorous impact evaluations undertaken successfully. The applicant provides welcome detail on how MDRC will do its work (p. 27). (*Organizational Capacity, A.i. and ii*)

The applicant has a consistent track record of supporting expansion and it is reasonable to assume it has developed a strong capacity to do so based on:

- A longstanding collaboration with another industry learning on nonprofit management consulting, Bridgespan.

- Clarity about the support that they provide (e.g., growth capital, business planning, evaluation, routine reviews, fundraising) and the rationale for that support being plausibly linked to successful expansion. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i.*)

Significant Weaknesses

It has not demonstrated a capacity to measure how much the different elements in its non-financial support model contribute to the overall difference it makes for its grantees. It is asserted at various points that investments in planning, rigorous performance measurement and independent evaluation make a difference for subgrantees. Some supportive anecdotes are provided. But there is no indication that EMCF has a rigorous system to evaluate these different interventions. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i. and ii*)

For example, it could have included in the application how the successes/failures in various aspects of expansion of its past grantees correlated to its support model. Put another way, the programs they mention receive considerable support from lots of funders – what is the warrant that what EMCF provided made a significant difference?

Focusing on the applicant's ability to support growth, on p.9 it states that investment in a planning process "helped the Tennessee-centered nonprofit chart a growth strategy that led to national stature and impact." On p. 20 it cites "the number of grantees that EMCF has helped to advance to higher levels...." On p. 25, it cites its "long track record of helping grantees to higher levels of evidence, capacity OD and scale," giving three examples of grantee success on these dimensions. But there is no evidence offered to show how elements in their model contributed how much to this success. What changes in outcomes can be attributed to what parts of the model? What proportion of investments in planning versus performance management versus independent evaluation yielded such results? More generally, what is the cost-effectiveness of the different elements in the model? To get more granular, we don't know if EMCF is learning what types of evaluation are most relevant when. Is it evaluating with a full palette? What are the relevant rates of success for elements in its model? (*Organizational Capacity, A.i. and ii*)

The applicant cites its repeated use of two "independent" researchers to evidence its determination to evaluate the effects of its grantmaking strategy. Given the ongoing nature of this relationship, we have a concern of at least the perception of, if not a creeping reality of, dependence. It would be better if the applicant provided the results from its participation in the leading industry benchmarking tool, the Center for Effective Philanthropy Grantee Perception Report. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i. and ii*)

The proposal introduces the independent researchers as an evaluation of the applicant's performance. But the description of the research speaks more to what the subgrantees do than to EMCF's performance. This would seem to show at a minimum an unexplained inconsistency and therefore a cause for concern. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i. and ii*)

Turning to the third party OD provider, Bridgespan, we are not informed as to how the applicant assesses Bridgespan's impact on the grantees.

In sum, the applicant's capacity for self-assessment and continuous improvement would be more evident if it showed a similar level of attention to metrics of its own performance than to that of its grantees. The proposal states that the foundation and trustees review performance and progress toward "annual milestones" (what are those?) and the efficacy of their strategy, staffing, financial systems and

Applicant Name: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Application ID#: 10si115503

communication. This would appear to be vague and is not commensurate with thoughtfulness by which they review grantees' performance. (p. 30) (*Organizational Capacity, A.i. and ii*)

Select a Rating for ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

☐ Excellent

☐ Strong

☒ Satisfactory

☐ Weak/Non-responsive

COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (20%)

The Social Innovation Fund NOFA states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy.

A. BUDGET AND PROGRAM DESIGN

In evaluating the cost effectiveness and budget adequacy of your proposed program, the Corporation will consider:

- i. Whether your program is cost-effective
- ii. Whether your budget is adequate to support your program design.

Provide a panel assessment of the application's COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY as follows:

- Write a brief Narrative Assessment;
- List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and
- Select a Rating for this section.

Panel Narrative Assessment

This applicant is asking for the top-most limit of the grant amount range -- \$10 million. The budget proposed for the use of evidence, data, and evaluation (at 20 percent) is proportional and should be able to meet the high standards of measurement and accountability for the SIF. It is harder to assess from the application whether they will have a larger systemic effect in any of the identified areas of geographic concentration, but if they support projects that demonstrate success, then it is fair to say that the budgets indicated will ensure that this success enable documentation and publicization at the level required to support replication and expansion.

Significant Strengths

Consistent with its status as an endowed private foundation, the applicant is able to set aside a larger proportion of its budget for impact planning, assessing and learning (IPAL) than organizations that must solicit funding from sources that do not readily accept the value of IPAL. Accordingly, the allocation of 20 percent of the overall budget to evaluation and management consulting support is exemplary. In addition, the applicant is allocating \$2M to MDRC in year 1 to assist subgrantees with program assessment and evaluation, specifically feasibility studies for 4-6 subgrantees, first-year start up for 4

Applicant Name: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Application ID#: 10si115503

full-scale RCTS. There is an allocation of \$10M to MDRC for first 3 years for 8-10 feasibility studies (to determine evaluation options), "several" assessment studies (to inform program operations), begin to work on up to 6 full-scale experimental evaluations. To meet these costs, EMCF is contributing an additional \$3M over and above SIF match in year 1 (to assist with MDRC, Bridgespan consultations). (*Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy A.ii*)

Significant Weaknesses

Because the proposal provides no evidence of the relative contributions of the elements of its non-financial support, it is a minimal significant weakness that the applicant does not appear to have an approach to increasing cost effectiveness. (*Cost Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy A.i*)

Select a Rating for COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

☒ Excellent

☐ Strong

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Weak/Non-responsive

OVERALL APPRAISAL

I. Provide a 3 - 5 sentence Overall Appraisal Statement of the application taking into consideration:

The proposal is well-crafted and generally convincing. EMCF has a strong track record of multiyear support at substantial levels of funding for high performing youth development organizations. The proposal communicates a coherent application of its social investment model to the SIF NOFA criteria. Their model includes longstanding collaborations with talented service providers MDRC (research and evaluation) and Bridgespan (organizational development; expansion). We have noted numerous significant weaknesses in the proposal, however, that we would not expect to see particularly from an endowed foundation with many years of work on these problems. The main weakness in the application, and apparently EMCF practice, is an unsatisfactory level of self-evaluation, particularly as to how to distinguish the relative contributions of the different elements in its model. It cannot be assumed that its model works, and while it is plausible that it does, we feel that application merits an overall rating of strong mainly because of a strong track record and excellent budget adequacy.

II. Select one Band for this application (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

Ensure that your selection is supported by your panel's Narrative Assessments, significant strengths and weaknesses, Ratings, and Overall Appraisal Statement. Take into consideration the weighting of each category.

☐ **Band I (Excellent):** A comprehensive and thorough application of excellent merit with very significant strengths and no/minimal significant weaknesses.

☒ **Band II (Strong):** An application that demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support, where the value of the significant strengths outweigh the identified weaknesses.

☐ **Band III (Satisfactory):** An application with potential, where strengths and weaknesses are approximately equal. However, some fundamental weaknesses have been identified.

Applicant Name: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Application ID#: 10si115503

- ☐ **Band IV (Weak/Non-Responsive):** An application with very significant weaknesses and no/minimal significant strengths that have been identified. This option may also include an application that is non-responsive to the published criteria.

CONSENSUS RUBRIC

Please use this Consensus Rubric as guidance when selecting your Ratings or Bands.

BAND I (Excellent) — *A BAND I rating reflects that the application is compelling, consistently excellent in quality, and addresses all requirements; thereby showing the highest potential for success.*

The **Excellent** application consistently:

- ✓ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise.
- ✓ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested.
- ✓ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Provides clear evidence to support all objectives of this section (no assumptions are made).
- ✓ Supports ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting ideas to objectives.

BAND II (Strong) — *A BAND II rating reflects that the application is solid, good-quality, and has great potential for success.*

The **Strong** application:

- ✓ Provides a response to all of the information requested.
- ✓ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Explains most assumptions and reasons.
- ✓ Supports ideas with comprehensive plans, examples, or outlines.

BAND III (Satisfactory) — *A BAND III rating reflects that the application generally meets requirements for a reasonable chance of success, but is neither especially strong nor especially weak.*

The **Satisfactory** application:

- ✓ Covers most of the information requested, with a few exceptions.
- ✓ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
- ✓ Supports individual ideas with plans, examples, or outline.

BAND IV (Weak/Non-responsive) — *A weak/non-responsive rating reflects that the application is below standard especially in ability, skill, or quality; indicating that this application will most likely not succeed as described or is not responsive to the application requirements.*

The **Weak/Non-responsive** application:

- ✓ Does not provide one or more key pieces of requested information.
- ✓ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons with little or no connection to objectives.
- ✓ Tends to "parrot" back the question, rather than answer and explain it

Applicant Name: The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation

Application ID#: 10si115503

- ✓ Makes many assumptions and many reasons are not defined.
- ✓ Did not connect the activities to the anticipated results.
- ✓ Does not address or respond to the requirements/conditions of the NOFA.
- ✓ Proposes activities that are not consistent with the NOFA and application instructions.